

A

JOURNEY TO KATMANDU

(THE CAPITAL OF NEPAUL),

WITH

THE CAMP OF JUNG BAHADOOR;

INCLUDING

A SKETCH OF THE NEPAULESE AMBASSADOR
AT HOME.

By LAURENCE OLIPHANT.



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TO
SIR ANTHONY OLIPHANT, C.B.,
CHIEF JUSTICE OF CEYLON,
THE FOLLOWING PAGES ARE INSCRIBED BY
HIS AFFECTIONATE SON,
THE AUTHOR.

P R E F A C E.

THE interest which was manifested in the Nepaulese Embassy during the short residence of Jung Bahadour in England leads me to hope that a description of the romantic country and independent Court which he came to represent, as well as some account of his own previous eventful career, may not be unacceptable to the English public—more especially as no work upon Nepaul has been published in this country, that I am aware of, since Dr. Hamilton's, which appeared about the year 1819.

Through the kindness and friendship of the Nepaulese Ambassador, I was enabled to visit Katmandu under most favourable circumstances; and during the journey thither in his company I had abundant opportunity of obtaining much interesting information, and of gaining an insight into the character of the people, and their mode of every-day life, for which a residence in camp was peculiarly favourable.

In the Terai I was fortunate enough to witness the Nepaulese mode of elephant-catching, so totally unlike that of any other country, while the grand scale on which our hunting party was organised was equally novel.

I therefore venture to submit this volume to the public, in the hope that the novelty of a portion of the matter contained in it will in some degree compensate for its manifold defects.



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JOURNEY TO KATMANDU,

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CHAPTER I.

Arrival of Jung Bahadoor in Ceylon — Voyage to Calcutta — Rifle practice on board the Atalanta — Rifle-shooting — Colonel Dherr Shum Shere — A journey along the Grand Trunk Road of Bengal — The experimental railway — The explosion at Benares.

TOWARDS the close of the year 1850 a considerable sensation was created in the usually quiet town of Colombo by the arrival in Ceylon of His Excellency General Jung Bahadoor, the Nepaulese Ambassador, on his return to Nepaul, bearing the letter of the Queen of England to the Rajah of that country.

The accounts which had preceded him of the magnificence of the jewels with which his person was generally adorned, had raised expectations amongst the natives which were doomed to disappointment: intelligence had been received by Jung of the death of the Queen of Nepaul, and the whole Embassy was in deep mourning, so that their appearance on landing created no little astonishment, clad, as

they all were, in spotless white, excepting their shoes, which were of black cloth—leather not being allowed to form part of the Nepaulese mourning costume.

His Excellency had a careworn expression of countenance, which might have been caused either by the dissipation attendant upon the gaieties of his visit to London, by grief for his deceased Queen, or by sea-sickness during his recent stormy passage across the Gulf of Manaar. He had been visiting sundry Hindoo shrines, and it was for the purpose of worshipping at the temple of Ramiseram, which is situate on the island of that name, in the Gulf of Manaar, forming part of Adam's Bridge, that he touched at Colombo. Here I was fortunate enough to make his acquaintance, and, attracted by his glowing description of sport in Nepaul, accepted an invitation to accompany him to that country, in order to judge of it for myself.

So good an opportunity is indeed rarely afforded to a European of visiting Nepaul, and of inspecting the internal economy of its semi-barbarous Court. I soon found that Jung Bahadoor excelled no less as a travelling companion than he had done as Premier and Ambassador.

As doubts had arisen and some misapprehension had prevailed in England as to his position in his own country, I was anxious to ascertain what was his real rank and how he would be received there. It was reported that he had risked his temporal welfare by quitting his country, while, in order that his eternal welfare should in no way be compromised

by this bold and novel proceeding, he had obtained an express reservation to be made in his favour at Benares, overcoming, by means of considerable presents, the scruples of a rapacious and not very conscientious priesthood.

The ostensible object of the mission had reference, as far as I could learn, to a portion of the Terai (a district lying upon the northern frontier of British India) which formerly belonged to Nepaul, and which was annexed by the Indian Government after the war of 1815-16; but it is probable that other motives than any so purely patriotic actuated the Prime Minister. His observant and inquiring mind had long regarded the British power in India with wonder and admiration—sentiments almost unknown amongst the apathetic Orientals, who, for the most part, have become too much accustomed to the English to look upon them with the same feelings as are entertained towards them by the hardy and almost savage race inhabiting the wild valleys of the Himalayas.

But besides the wish to gratify his curiosity, there existed yet another incentive which induced him to undertake this expedition. The precarious nature of his high position in Nepaul urged on him the good policy, if not the necessity, of a visit to England, for he doubtless felt, and with good reason, that the Native Durbar would be inclined to respect a man who had been honoured with an interview with the Queen of so mighty a nation, and had had opportunities of securing the support of

her government, should he ever be driven to seek its aid.

* * * * *

The Atalanta, one of the oldest steam frigates in the Indian navy, had been placed at the disposal of His Excellency, and, upon the evening of the 9th of December 1850, was lying in the Colombo Roads, getting up her steam as speedily as possible, while I was uneasily perambulating the wooden jetty, which is all the little harbour can boast in the shape of a pier, endeavouring to induce some apathetic boatmen to row me over the bar, a pull of three miles, against a stiff breeze. It was bright moonlight, and the fire from the funnel of the old ship seemed rushing out more fast and furious in proportion as the boatmen became more drowsy and immovable; finally they protested that it was an unheard-of proceeding for anybody to wish to go on board ship on such a night at such an hour, and insinuated that all verbal or pecuniary persuasions would be alike unavailing. It is very evident that Colombo boatmen are a thriving community; still they seem a timid race, for upon my having recourse to threats containing fearful allusions, which there was not the remotest possibility of my being able to carry into execution, a wonderful revolution was effected in the feelings of the sleepers around me; they forthwith began to unwind themselves from the linen wrappers in which natives always swathe themselves at night like so many hydropathic patients, and, converting their recent sheets into turbans and waistcloths, they

got with many grumblings into a tub-like boat, just as the smoke from the steamer was becoming ominously black. Their eyes once open, the men went to work in good earnest, and an hour afterwards I had the satisfaction of walking the deck of the *Atalanta*, which was going at her utmost speed, some seven knots an hour.

In the morning we were off Point de Galle, and put in there for General Jung Bahadoor, who, with some of his suite, had made the journey thither by land.

All the world make voyages now-a-days; and nobody thinks of describing a voyage to India any more than he would an excursion on the Thames, unless he is shipwrecked, or the vessel he is in is burnt and he escapes in an open boat, or has some such exciting incident to relate. We were *unfortunate* in these respects, but in our passengers we found much to interest and amuse us; and as everything regarding the Nepaulese Ambassador is received with interest in England, a description of the proceedings of one day, as a sample of the ten we spent on board the "*Atalanta*," may not be altogether uninteresting.

Time never seemed to hang heavy on the hands of the Minister Sahib, for that was his more ordinary appellation; rifle practice was a daily occupation with him, and usually lasted two hours. Surrounded by those of his suite in whose peculiar department was the charge of the magnificent battery he had on board, he used to take up his station on the

poop, and the crack of the rifle was almost invariably followed by an exclamation of delight from some of his attendants, as the bottle, bobbing far astern, was sunk for ever, or the three strung, one below the other, from the end of the fore-yard-arm, were shattered by three successive bullets in almost the same number of seconds. Pistol practice succeeded that of the rifle, and the ace of hearts at 15 paces was a mark he rarely missed.

Then the dogs were to be trained, and in a very peculiar manner; a kid was dragged along the deck before the noses of two handsome stag hounds, who, little suspecting that a huge hunting-whip was concealed in the folds of their master's dress, were unable to resist so tempting a victim and invariably made a rush upon it, a proceeding which brought down upon them the heavy thong of the Minister Sahib's whip in the most remorseless manner. That task accomplished to his satisfaction, and not being able to think of anything else wherewith to amuse himself, it would occur to him that his horse, having thrown out a splint from standing so long, ought to be physicked. He was accordingly made to swallow a quantity of raw brandy! It was useless to suggest any other mode of treatment, either of horse or dogs. The General laughed at my ignorance, and challenged me to a game of backgammon. Occasionally gymnastics or jumping were the order of the day, and he was so lithe and active that few could compete with him at either.

While smoking his evening pipe he used to talk with delight of his visit to Europe, looking back with regret on the gaieties of the English and French capitals, and recounting with admiration the wonders of civilization he had seen in those cities. He was loudest in his praise of England. This may have arisen from a wish to gratify his auditory, and it certainly had that effect. He had not thought it necessary, however, to perfect himself in the language of either country beyond a few of what he considered the more important phrases. His stock consisted chiefly of—How do you do?—Very well, thank you—Will you sit down?—You are very pretty—which pithy sentences he used to rattle out with great volubility, fortunately not making an indiscriminate use of them.

But my particular friend was the youngest of his two fat brothers, whose merits, alas! were unknown in England, the more elevated position of the Minister Sahib monopolizing all the attention of the lion-loving public. Colonel Dhere Shum Shere, such was his name, was the most jovial, light-hearted, and thoroughly unselfish being imaginable, brave as a lion, as recent events in Nepaul have proved, always anxious to please, and full of amusing conversation, which, however, from my limited knowledge of Hindostance, I was unable fully to appreciate.

It is considered a breach of hospitality to make invidious remarks affecting the character of the mansion in which you are a guest; but although my

recollections of the Atalanta are most agreeable in reference to the kindness of the officers, I must say she was a most indisputable tub ; and if there is an individual who deserves to be turned slowly before the fires in her engine-room, so as to be kept in a state of perpetual blister, it is the Parsee contractor who furnished the provisions, for so meagre was the supply that we could barely satisfy the cravings of hunger.

On the morning of the tenth day after leaving Ceylon we came in sight of the city of palaces, and, sweeping up its magnificent river, soon after anchored amidst a host of other shipping.

Of Calcutta I need say nothing ; Chouringhee Road is almost as well known in these days of quick communication as Piccadilly ; this is not quite the case with towns in the interior : if it is easy to get to Calcutta, it is not so easy to get beyond, and the means of locomotion by which the traveller makes the journey to Benares are of the most original nature.

The morning of New Year's Day found me comfortably ensconced in a roomy carriage, built almost upon the model of an English stage-coach, in which, with my fellow-traveller, I had passed the night, and which was being dragged along at the rate of about four miles an hour by ten coolies, harnessed to it in what the well-meaning philanthropist of Exeter Hall would call a most barbarous way.

The road along which we were travelling in this

extraordinary manner was not, as might be expected, impassable for horses ; on the contrary, it was an excellent macadamized and perfectly level road, denominated the Great Trunk Road of Bengal.

The country through which this road led us was flat, stale, but not unprofitable, since on either side were paddy-fields extending *ad infinitum*, studded here and there with clumps of palms.

The climate was delightful, and the morning air tempted us to uncoil ourselves from our night-wrappers, and take a brisk walk in the dust ; after which we mounted the coach-box, and devised sundry practical methods for accelerating our team, who however were equally ingenious in contriving to save themselves fatigue.

The mid-day sun at last ridded them of their tormentors, and we once more betook ourselves to our comfortable beds in the interior of the conveyance, there to moralize over the barbarism of a man, calling himself an enlightened Englishman, in employing men instead of horses to drag along two of his fellow-countrymen, who showed themselves even more dead to every feeling of humanity by the way in which they urged on their unfortunate fellow-creatures. These coolies were certainly very well paid, and need not have been so employed had they not chosen—for they had all applied for their several appointments—but then the ignominy of the thing !

And so we rolled lazily along, hoping to reach

Benares some time within the next fortnight. Before dark we passed through Burdwan, where a few Bengal civilians vegetate on large salaries, to do the work of the rajah, who is still more highly paid not to interfere. He lives magnificently in his palace, and they live magnificently in theirs. We arrived at a small rest-house at night, where we had the satisfaction of eating a fowl in cutlets an hour after it had been enjoying the sweets of life.

There is a considerable amount of enjoyment in suddenly coming to hills after you have for a long time seen nothing but flat country—in first toiling up one and then bowling down the other side, at the imminent peril of the coolies' necks—in seeing streams when you have seen nothing but wells—in coming amidst wood and water and diversified scenery, when every mile that you have travelled for a week past has been the same as the last. Such were our feelings as we woke at daylight one morning in the midst of the Rajmahal hills.

There were a good many carts passing with coal from the Burdwan coal-mines; moreover, we saw sticks, and from the top of each fluttered a little white flag, suggestive of a railway, whereby our present mode of conveyance would be knocked on the head, and all the poor coolies who were pushing us along would be put out of employ. Notwithstanding the disastrous results which must accrue, a railway is really contemplated; but I have heard doubts thrown out as to the present line being the best that could be

obtained. It is urged that it has to contend against water carriage—that, with the exception of the Burdwan mines, the coal of which is of an inferior quality, there is no mineral produce—that immense tracts of country through which it passes are totally uncultivated, and from a want of water will in all probability remain so—and it has been calculated that, even if the whole traffic at present passing along the great trunk road of Bengal was to become quadrupled, and if all the Bengal civilians were to travel up and down every day, and various rajahs to take express trains once a week, it would not pay : all these things being considered, were it not that its merits and demerits have been maturely considered by wiser, or at least better-informed men than the passing travellers, one might have been inclined to think that those who expressed doubts regarding its success had some good foundation for them.

However, it is better to have a railway on a doubtful line than none at all ; the shareholders are guaranteed 5 per cent., and the Government is rich and can afford to pay them. So let us wish success to the experimental railway, and hope that the means of transport may soon be more expeditious than they are at present.

It will doubtless open out the resources of the country, though I cannot but think, for many reasons, that it would have been more judicious to have made the line from Allahabad to Delhi the commencement

of the railway system in this part of India, instead of leaving it for a continuation of the line that is now being made.

The bridges we passed over are all on the suspension principle, and do credit to the government; the rivers are difficult to bridge in any other way, as the rains flood them to such an extent that arches will not remain standing for any length of time. It took us two hours to cross the Soan, which we forded or ferried according as the streams between the sand-banks were deep or shallow. This large river is at times flooded to so great an extent that it is one of the most serious obstructions to the railway.

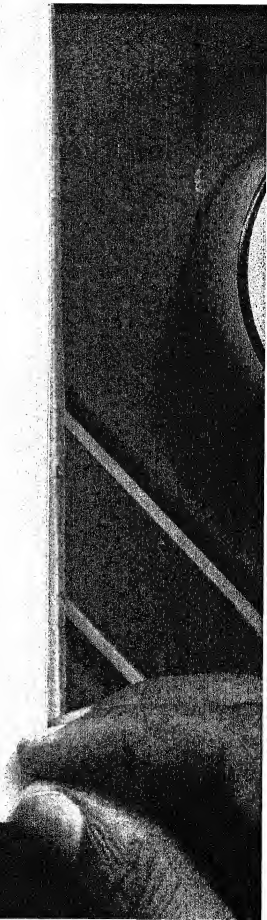
It was not until the morning of the seventh day after leaving Calcutta that we found ourselves on the banks of the Ganges. The Holy City loomed large in the grey dawn of morning, with its tapering minarets barely discernible above it, looking like elongated ghosts.

We were ferried across in a boat of antique construction, better suited for any other purpose than the one to which it was applied, and landed in the midst of the ruins caused by the dreadful explosion of gunpowder that had taken place the previous year: it had occasioned a fearful destruction of property and loss of life, and many hair-breadth escapes were recounted to us. We were told, indeed, that two children, after being buried for five days, were dug out alive; two officers were blown out of the window of an hotel, one of whom was uninjured, the other was only

wounded by a splinter, whilst the Kitnutgar, who was drawing a cork close to them at the time, was killed on the spot.

In the course of an hour after leaving this scene of desolation we reached the hospitable mansion which was destined to be our home during our short stay in Benares.

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CHAPTER II.

Benares — Cashmere Mull's House — The Chouk — The Bisheshwan Temple, and Maido Rai Minar — Jung Bahadoor in Benares — A Rajah's visit — The marriage of Jung Bahadoor — Review of the Nepaul Rifle Regiment — Benares College.

WHATEVER may be said of the large salaries of the Bengal civilians, they certainly deserve great credit for the praiseworthy employment of their wealth ; and making amends as it were for the backwardness of India as regards hotels, they supply their places to the friendless traveller, in a way which our frigid friends at home might imitate with advantage. I look back upon my stay in Benares with the greatest pleasure, and shall long remember the kindness I there experienced.

There is much to be seen in the Holy City, and the means of locomotion which I should recommend the sight-seer to adopt are Tom Johns, or chairs swung upon poles, with or without hoods, as the case may be. Upon arriving at the Chouk or Market-place, we hired two of these conveyances and started to see the residence of Cashmere Mull. But first I must make an attempt, however unsuccessful, to describe the Chouk : it is a large square, studded with raised oblong platforms without walls, the roofs being supported by fluted Ionic columns. The Police

Court, in which a Native magistrate presides, forms one side of the square. On the platforms sit the vendors of shawls, skull-caps, toys, shells, sugar-cane, and various other commodities; but to enumerate the extraordinary diversity of goods exposed for sale, or to describe the Babel of tongues which confound the visitor as he wanders through the motley crowd, would be impossible.

We turned out of the Chouk down a narrow street about three feet broad, gloomy from the height of the houses, and unpleasant from the great crowd and close atmosphere; every now and then we got jammed into a corner by some Brahmince bull, who would insist upon standing across the street to eat the fine cauliflower he had just plundered from the stall of an unresisting greengrocer, and who, exercising the proud rights of citizenship, could only be politely coaxed to move his unwieldy carcass out of the way.

We wended our way through pipe bazaars and vegetable bazaars, where each shopkeeper has a sort of stall, with about three feet frontage to the street, but of unknown depth, and a narrow balcony supported by carved wood-work over his head, out of the latticed windows of which bright eyes look down upon the passengers. Whenever there is a piece of wall not otherwise occupied in this compact and busy city, you see depicted, in gaudy colours, elephants rushing along with dislocated joints in hot pursuit of sedate parrots, or brilliant peacocks looking with calm composure upon camels going express, who must inevitably crush them in their headlong career, but the

vain birds, apparently taken up with admiration of their own tails, are blind to the impending danger, thereby reading a good lesson both to the passers-by and to the shopkeepers opposite. Now a sudden jerk prevents you from further moralizing, as you find that you are going round a corner so sharp that you must get bumped either before or behind. There are ugly women carrying brass water-vessels, rich merchants on ponies, sirwahs on horses, here and there in the wider streets a camel or an elephant, but very seldom, as few streets would accommodate either of them; finally there are chuprassies who disperse the crowd with their swords in a most peremptory manner, smiting everything indiscriminately, except the Brahminee bulls, which, although they are much the most serious impediments, are left "alone in their glory."

By the exertions of these city police we reached Cashmere Mull's house, noted as a specimen of antique Oriental architecture.

The court-yard into which we were first ushered reminded me of an old English "hostelrie;" it was small and uncovered, and round each story ran a curiously worked balcony, on to which opened doors and windows, carved with strange devices, and all the nooks and crannies formed by so much intricate carving were filled with dust and cobwebs. Passing up a narrow, dark, and steep stone stair, we reached a second court-yard, upon the balcony of which we emerged, and which was so very like the last, that I imagined it to be the same, until I remarked that it was smaller,

and, if possible, more dirty. We thence ascended to the flat roof of the house, and on our way looked through half-open doors into dark dungeons of rooms, which one would not for the world have ventured into at night.

There was a raised stage with steps up to it, which we ascended and found ourselves on a level with a great many similar stages on the tops of a great many similar houses. A stone parapet about 8 feet high, with beautiful open carving, enclosed this stage, so that we could inspect our neighbours through our stone screen with impunity. On the next roof to where we were was a boy training pigeons, and the numerous crates or frames on the surrounding house-tops showed this to be a favourite amusement. The young gentleman in question certainly made his flock obey him in a wonderful manner, his chief object being to take prisoner a pigeon from his neighbour's flock. He directed their gyrations by loud shrill cries, and, as there were numbers of other members of "Young Benares" employed in like manner, it seemed wonderful how he could recognize his pigeons, or they their master.

Leaving this antique specimen of a nobleman's town house, we passed through a maze of narrow streets; and bobbing under low archways at the imminent peril of fracturing our skulls, we arrived at the Bisheshwan Temple, which was crowded with Hindoos worshipping the Lingum, representations of which met the eye in every direction.

A well in the yard behind the temple was sur-

rounded by worshippers of the god, who is supposed to have plunged down it and never to have come up again. If so, he must find the smell of decayed vegetation very oppressive, as garlands of flowers and handfuls of rice are continually being offered up, or rather down, to him. From this well we had a good view of the temple, which was covered with gold by Runjeet Singh, and presents a gorgeous and dazzling appearance.

In close vicinity to this temple is a mosque built by Arungzebe to annoy the Hindoos. I ascended the Maido Rai Minar or minaret, and from its giddy height had a magnificent panorama of the city and its environs, with the Ganges flowing majestically beneath, its left bank teeming with life, while the opposite bank seemed desolate.

The observatory, or man mundil, is on the river's bank, and affords a pretty view from its terraces, which are covered with disks and semicircles and magical figures cut in stone.

Gopenate Dore Peshad is the great dealer in Benares embroidery, as well as its manufacturer. We paid him a visit and were delighted with the rich variety of embroidered goods which were displayed; we saw pieces valued at from 10,000 rupees downwards: magnificent smoking carpets, housings and trappings for horses, shawls, caps, kenkabs, and other articles of eastern attire, were spread out before us in gorgeous profusion. After eating a cardamum, and touching with our pocket-handkerchief some cotton on which had been dropped otto of roses, we

ascended to the house-top, and found it built upon much the same plan as Cashmere Mull's, without its antique carving and quaint appearance.

We were not a little glad when the bustle and heat attendant on so much sight-seeing was over, and we forced our way back through the crowded streets.

The population of Benares is estimated by Mr. Prinsep at nearly 200,000; its trade consists chiefly in sugar, saltpetre, indigo, opium, and embroidered cloths; besides which, the city has advantages in its position on the great river, making it, jointly with Mirzapore, the *dépôt* for the commerce of the Dukum and interior of Hindostan.

General Jung Bahadoor had reached Benares a few days before I arrived there, and I found him installed in a handsome house, the envy of all rajahs, the wonder of the natives, and the admiration of his own countrymen, some thousands of whom had come thus far to meet him. If he had been a *lion* in London, he was not less an object of interest at Benares—his house was always crowded with visitors of high degree, Indian and European; one old native rajah in particular was frequently to be seen in close conference with him; and the result was, that the Prime Minister of Nepaul became the husband of the second daughter of his Highness the ex-Rajah of Coorg. Upon the day following his nuptials my friend and I called upon him, and to our surprise he offered to present us to his newly-wedded bride. We, of course, expressed our sense of

the honour he was doing us; and had just reached the balcony, the stairs leading up to which were on the outside of the house, when our friend the bridegroom perceived his father-in-law, the Coorg rajah, coming in a most dignified manner down the approach. Like a schoolboy caught in the master's orchard, he at once retreated and unceremoniously hurried us back—and just in time, for no doubt, if the old Coorg had detected him thus exhibiting his daughter the day after he had married her, he would have mightily disapproved of so improper a proceeding. This incident shows how utterly Jung despised those prejudices which enthralled his bigoted father-in-law. He was, in fact, the most European Oriental, if I may so speak, that I ever met with, and more thoroughly unaffected and unreserved in his communication with us than is the habit with eastern great men, who always seem afraid of compromising themselves by too much condescension. An instance of this occurred during another visit. While we were chatting on indifferent subjects a native rajah was announced, as being desirous of paying a visit of ceremony. Jung immediately stepped forward to receive him with much politeness. The rajah commenced apologising for not having called sooner, excusing himself on the plea of the present being the only auspicious hour which had been available since his Excellency's arrival; a compliment which the latter returned by remarking that it was unfortunate that his immediate departure would preclude the possibility of his returning his